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MASTER AND MAN:

A PLAY

IN A

PROLOGUE AND FOUR ACTS.

BY

FRANCIS HOWARD WILLIAMS.

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Aug 3
1764 2

DAN'L F. GILLIN, PR., 717 Sansom St., Phila.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

EUSTACE VERNON, an English artist.
TONIO RIVELLI, his valet; afterwards known as the Count Cavalli.
FROTHINGHAM HOLLAND, a New York club man.
DR. BRIGGS, who tempers medicine with scientific invention.
MRS. HOLLAND, a matron of New York society.
OLIVE, her daughter.
CECILY MARIGOLD, niece of Mrs. Holland.
STELLA, wife of Rivelli.

The Scene of the Prologue is in Rome. The action of the rest of the play is in New York.

Time the present

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PROLOGUE.

Studio of Eustace Vernon in Rome. (Rivelli discovered standing before a picture, partly finished, upon the easel).

RIVELLI. (*solus.*) Pretty well my young aristocrat. Efen your cursed pride does not keep you from hard vork. You want fame, eh? A little vord vith a big meaning; four letters and efery letter a lie! And for vat you vant it? For her, (*motions towards Easel,*) a girl with soft eyes and bright hair. Yes, there is the shadow under the eyelids and the fall of the hair on the temple. Who would belief you have but three times seen her? That you haf not yet discover her name? Your brains are queeck ven your heart is touched. You can paint eyelids and blushes, Master Vernon; why not scars? (*placing his hand to his left temple*) scars like *this?* Malediction!

And *this* is your Ideal?

Vell, 'tis pretty enough in its way. I'll svear she is not Italian. The colors are too fleeting. A voman like zat only lif fife year. She is awkward until eighteen, and faded after tventy three. Bah! They have no blood, these Saxon beauties. Stella is of a better type.

(*Enter c. Stella.*)

STELLA. Ah, Tonio; you spoke my name. I hear it as I step upon the sill. It means that you think of me; that you will be kinder to me Tonio, does it not?

RIVELLI. No. Why come you here? Have I not told you that it will ruin me to have you forever at my heels?

STELLA. But, Tonio, hear me—

RIVELLI. Silence, I say. I haf explain all to you. Keep away and I can rise and then lift you Once let yourself be seen, and all is lost. I have nothing I tell you.

STELLA. But, Tonio, for mercy's sake! The sweet bambino almost is starving. Oh, I prayed to the Holy Virgin for bread, and it seemed like a whisper in my heart which bade me come to you. He's hungry, Tonio. *Your* child is hungry. Drife me not away.

RIVELLI. I haf nothing, nothing.

STELLA. But perhaps the Signor whom you serve—

RIVELLI. I serve?

STELLA. Oh, for whom you work—

RIVELLI. Fool! Were your existence known to him, all would be lost. And do you think I should cringe to him—to him who gave me this disgrace upon my forehead vith his riding whip? Oh these English curs, with their pride of blood and their length of purse, who think they possess the universe in fee. Why girl, you are but a peasant. I was but a peasant, till he chose to make me a gentleman. And *why* did he choose? Not for my sake, but to salve his own conscience. 'Tis the way with these *cattle.* A peasant is but a thing to bow to them, to take their blows, and after take their pence. They strike him, and then call him "my goot man," and give him a shilling. 'Tis as easy as lying. Bah! You would seek favors of him?

STELLA. No, no; not favors. Only honest work. See these works; see this and this. The Signor must have models for these studies and—

RIVELLI. Ha, ha, ha. And you think *you* could serve as model for these? Ha, ha, ha!

STELLA. Ah, Tonio; 'tis not so long since you thought me beautiful enough. Since you said—

RIVELLI.—Never mind what I said. I was a fool. Now go.

STELLA. But the bambino?

RIVELLI.—Let him starve. 'Tis better so!

STELLA. No, no. You cannot mean it. Tonio, I am without bread. I will do all I can to keep out of your way and so help you to rise. I know that I am ignorant and you educated. The Signor has given you book learning and made a gentleman of you.

RIVELLI. Bah! He!

STELLA. While I am but a peasant still. I know I should drag you back and I'll keep away. But you loved me once, Tonio; and I cannot see the bambino die of want.

RIVELLI. Will you stop your whining? Someone will hear.

STELLA. I will not trouble you, Tonio; only give me enough for a little and bread. I'll not taste it myself. I can live, if only I can get food for *him.* For the love of heaven—

RIVELLI. Be quiet, I tell you!

STELLA. Tonio, he will die.

RIVELLI. Let him. Now go.

STELLA. Tonio! Give me something.

RIVELLI. Well, take that.

(*He strikes her and rudely pushes her out. She screams).*

RIVELLI. Hush!

STELLA. I will never ask again. But from this moment I will be your judge.

RIVELLI. Be what you like; but go!

(*Exit Stella*).

RIVELLI. Curse this fate which forever keeps me in fear of losing all! Why cannot the woman let me alone? The fool cannot be made to understand that 'tis her own interest to keep out of sight.

VERNON (*from without*) Rivelli.

RIVELLI. Here Signor.

(*Enter Vernon*).

V. What was that scream? It sounded like a woman's voice.

R. Scream, Signor? I heard no scream.

V. Why yes But now. It surely was a woman's voice.

R. It must have been from some of the romps in the Plaza. I heard nothing, Signor.

V. Strange. I could have sworn to it.

R. If I may make bold to say it, I think the Signor meditates too much. He have complain much of ze head lately and I believe ze imagination is over stimulate. The Signor's condition is nervous.

V. You think me just a little —— ? (*touching his forehead*).

R. (*Crossing himself*). All the holy saints forbid, Signor. I said nervous.

V. What should have made me so?

R. Contemplation.

V. Of what?

R. (*Crossing himself*). The blessed Saints forfend!

V. Oh, this is terrible.

R. (*aside*). I wonder if he means ze million. (*aloud*). Oh, terrible indeed, Signor. Forgive me, my sympathy overcome me, (*he wipes his eyes*) I am but human, Signor, and your news falls upon me so suddenly.

V. But there's no time to lose. I go by the next steamer, Rivelli. Let everything remain. Pictures, marbles, all. Have my portmanteau packed, and get me the time schedules.

R. And you go alone, Signor?

V. Yes. But stop. You are one of the few whom I can trust. (*R. bows low.*) Would you like to go with me?

R. I am ever at your command, Signor.

V. Then come with me. Be quick. Ha!

(*A sudden knock. R. goes to door and takes in a telegram, which he hands to V. who opens it and then stands speechless.*)

R. Sir! Ha!?

(*V. hands R. the telegram.*)

R. Dead!

V. No. He still lives in me. His ruined life has at last found its rest. For *me* the real duty of living has but just begun.

R. And we start at once?

V. At once. From this moment I consecrate myself to the fulfilment of my vow.

R. And her? (*Lifting the drapery from the picture on the easel.*)

V. Alas! I dare not look, I dare not look.

(*V. rushes out.*)

R. These fools with consciences. Bah!

END OF PROLOGUE.

ACT I.

Drawing-Room of Mrs. Holland, in New York. Occasional laughter and the clink of glasses heard from adjoining room, at back.

(*Mrs. Holland, Olive and Cecily seated at small table, sipping tea. A servant passes across, at back, and draws the curtains at doorway.*

Cec. Oh, I think it's horrid.

Mrs. H. There my dear you show your want of judgment. If men didn't sit over their wine, as the phrase is, they'd be sure to drink in a hurry and so add the ills of dyspepsia to the evils of over-indulgence. Besides, we shouldn't have a chance to sip our tea.

Cec. I can't see that that would be very terrible; I'd much rather sip Sherry.

Olive. Treason

Mrs. H. Quite dreadful I m sure. It's one of the evidences of civilization that ladies retire from the table when a certain point is reached. The presence of woman is a restraint. We remove it at times, just as we unstring a bow,—to keep it elastic.

Cec But *I'd* like to be unstrung too, once in a while. I don't see why all the bows should be masculine.

Olive. You are a reformer Cecily.

Mrs. H. Men want the freedom of a chat *en garcon* occasionally. There are many little things they wish to talk about, which it wouldn't be quite the thing for ladies to hear.

(*Laughter from within.*)

Cec. That's one of the "little things," I suppose.

Mrs. H. Likely.

Cec. I'd like to know what it is, wouldn't you, Olive?

Ol. I have no such curiosity, I assure you.

Mrs. H. Quite right dear. I am sure Cecily doesn't reflect when she talks that way.

Cec. Oh no, I never reflect.

(*more laughter within.*)

But it must be just awfully funny, mustn't it?

Ol. It depends largely upon the point of view, I fancy.

Mrs. H. Altogether so. (*To Cecily.*) Have a biscuit, dear? For my part I like to see gentlemen enjoy themselves in their own way——

Cec. That's just it. I'd *like* to see them, but I don't, I only *hear* them, and that at a distance. Just as things liven up to an interesting point we're expected to retire. Its like going to a play and stopping your ears whenever the low comedian enters.

Olive, couldn't you crack some jokes over the tea? Even that might ease up the general gloom.

Mrs. H. My dear girl, you are continually chafing against the trammels of a proper conventionality. My good cousin, your father, did wisely in sending you into the country to live until you were eighteen, but I am equally sure that *I* have done wisely in bringing you back with us to town, now that you have passed that age. You want the least little bit of a check upon your *abandon*.

(*More laughter within.*)

Listen, I think the Count is making a speech. By the way, Olive, I wish you had not taken so queer a notion about staying away from dinner. I think the Count thought it rather odd. And now I shall have to present him to you here. It's always a trifle awkward—this after-dinner presentation.

Ol. You know, mamma, I do not especially incline to Counts

Cec. Oh he's not so bad, this one, I assure you. He paid me two compliments in bad French before we had finished the soup.

Mrs. H. You must remember he is Italian, not French.

Cec. Oh, I know. And Olive, he enquired after you in the most insinuating manner.

Ol. Yes; their manners are all insinuating. I know them. One could hardly pass a summer in Italy without learning something of the genus.

Mrs. H. You are prejudiced, my child; and let me tell you that prejudice is a very bad thing to indulge in. (*To Olive.*) Tea, dear? One

must always judge from the standpoint of a man's nationality. If one marries a Frenchman one expects to be called *Mon ange* on every occasion.

CEC. (*aside.*) For the first two months.

MRS. H. If an Italian, *Sposa Carissima*, with numberless honeyed vowels on the tongue.

CEC. (*aside.*) And a stiletto in the hand.

MRS. H. If an Englishman, simply, *my dear*.

CEC. (*aside.*) And precious lucky if she gets that.

MRS. H. As to the Germans ———

OL. Well! The Germans?

MRS. H. They only emit a guttural noise. Don't call you anything in particular.

CEC. And as for Americans, they call you *my darling*, for the first half year, and *old girl*, for the next half century. Oh, I know them.

OL. You seem to have studied characters to some purpose.

MRS. H. Ha, ha, ha. You are really quaint Cecily; if I can only give you the requisite tone without destroying your *naïveté*, you'll take society by storm when I bring you out.

CEC. Thank you. It's awfully good of you, I am sure. I don't believe I shall be half so hard on the foreign nobility as Olive is.

OL. You quite mistake me. I am not hard on anybody, but I don't see why Frothingham should give dinners to Italian Counts whom he has not known for a week.

MRS. H. Oh dear, dear This will never do. You forget, my child, that the world moves quite too fast to permit of long friendships and that sort of thing. You *will* hold on to your romantic ideas of an Arcadia where all the flowers are natural and all the sentiments artless. It's extremely pretty I admit; but one has to conform to one's surroundings. To be in the world one must be *of* it. Our position in society would be quite other than it is, had I not always looked out for it.

I think Frothingham quite right to cultivate the best people.

OL. How do you know, my dear mother that this gentleman belongs to the 'best people."

MRS. H. Ha, ha, ha. You sweet sample of simplicity! Why didn't Frothy meet him at the Stafford Club?

Wasn't he presented by Bertie Deval? And isn't that a guarantee? Besides, any one can see at a glance that Cavalli is to the manner born. His *savoir faire* at dinner was simply perfect; and had you not taken that silly notion to remain away———

OL. I beg you not to refer any more to that. I really had a headache.

CEC. Or— (*Taps her heart.*)

OL. Don't be silly Cecily.

MRS. H. Well, I have no quarrel with you; but I think you sometimes make a mistake.

OL. Mistake! why is there not something else in the world of a woman than the eternal study of policy? May she not aspire to the attainment of something noble and true in life? Surely you would not have me forever posing for an effect, or acting with a view to all future contingencies. Is there nothing but artifice?

MRS. H. There you go again. Not artifice at all. Simply art. We do not live in a state of nature, but under the conditions of a very complex art. Society is the essence of civilization. To abrogate the one is to crush out the other. Aspire all you like, but don't neglect the conventionalities of life, and always—as it were—

CE. Keep an eye to the main chance!

MRS. H. Well—ah—that is the idea, perhaps, but rather vulgarly expressed.

OL. Well, what is my fault?

MRS. H. You are too quiet, for one thing. Much too reserved.

CEC. That's the way with me, too.

MRS. H. Hardly, my dear. You need the curb rather than the spur.

(*Laughter again heard within.*)

Another cup of tea, child?

CEC. No, thanks. (*Aside.*) Who *could* enthuse on *tea?*

Mrs. H. touches a hand-bell. A servant enters R., and removes tea-tray.)

MRS. H. The great difficulty is to hit the happy mean in all these matters. There now was Mrs. Delatour. *She* had to contend with an opposite extreme. Her daughter, you know, eloped from boarding school at seventeen.

CEC. What luck some girls do have!

MRS. H. Luck! Good heavens! child, she ran off with her dancing-master.

CEC. How charming! I suppose life with them is one continual German!

MRS. H. One can indulge one's peculiarities and still always conform to society's rules. Look at our good friend, Dr. Briggs, for instance. I warrant he is enjoying his wine in the next room as much as any of them. He is always punctilious in matters of dress and etiquette and social form. Yet he has his eccentricities, as you know.

OL. Yes, we all know the dear doctor's peculiarities.

CEC. Has he invented anything new in the last twenty-four hours?

MRS. H. Ha, ha, ha. Most probably; though his last venture was so unlucky that I wonder he isn't discouraged.

CEC. What was it?

MRS. H. It was a balloon which he claimed had completely solved the problem of aerial navigation. He went up triumphantly to the enormous altitude of twenty feet and then dropped into the canal. Ha, ha, ha.

CEC. Oh, ha. ha, ha. How funny!

MRS. H. He came very near drowning.

CEC. How very funny! Ha, ha, ha.

OL, I judge *he* didn't find it so.

MRS. H. No. They fished him out with one of his own patent extension-rods for sportsmen. Ha, ha, ha. He said afterwards it wasn't every man who could save his life by a fishing-rod of his own invention Ha, ha, ha.

OL. Much like a doctor taking his own physic.

CEC. They're breaking up. Now Olive, look your loveliest.

OL. Faugh!

MRS. H. It would be as well, Olive dear, for you to show a little animation towards this Cavalli. He is a most polished gentleman; and really you are very *distraite*.

OL. With every desire to meet your wishes, I must say that I guess Count Cavalli will have to take me as he finds me.

CEC Hoity-toity! We just sniff at Counts, we do!

MRS. H. Let him find you agreeable; that is all.

OL. I shall hope for that result, I am sure.

(*Enter at back, Rivelli (as Count Cavalli), Frothingham Holland and Dr. Briggs.*)

Dr. B. (*to Rivelli.*) Not in the least, I assure you; the two magnets oppose each other and keep the pressure steady.

Cec. (*aside.*) More invention.

Dr. B. Ladies, since you left us, the table has seemed but a desolate garden with the roses all departed.

Cec. (*aside.*) Sort of a kitchen-garden, in fact.

Riv. Oh, Signora, Dr. Briggs' poetic expression is so facile as to leave but little chance for the eloquence of the rest of us. Truly ven the ladies haf quit the room the perfume of life quite vanish vith them.

Mrs. H. It is altogether astonishing that they can tear themselves away at all, with such masters of compliment at the board.

You have not yet met my daughter, Count, will you do me the honor?

Riv. (*Giving his arm to Mrs. H.*) A great happiness, Signora.

Froth. (*to Cecil.*) You are looking remarkably well, Cecily.

Cec. So you told me at dinner.

Mrs. H. Dear, I wish to present the Count Cavalli. My daughter, Count.

(*Rivelli bows low, and as he lifts his eyes to Olive's face, starts violently, but quickly recovers his self-possession.*)

Riv. I–I–am am honored. May I beg to express the hope that the indisposition which deprif us of Mees Holland's company at dinner is quite vanish?

Ol. I am feeling better, I thank you.

Cec. (*to Froth.*) Did you see that?

Froth. What?

Cec. Pshaw! men never see anything. Olive took him straight between the eyes.

Froth. Good Heavens!

Cec. I mean, he is struck. Didn't you notice how he started?

Froth. Never a bit, 'pon honor.

Cec. Oh, you men!

Mrs. H. I am sure, Count, that nothing short of one of Olive's terrible headaches could have prevented her presence.

Riv. It is a malady vich excuse everything. Though I should have thought that a head so beautiful could never ache. (*Bowing.*)

Ol. You compliment with Latin profuseness, Count. It is quite dazzling to an American.

Cec. (*To Froth.*) Did you hear that?

Froth. What?

Cec. You men never hear anything.

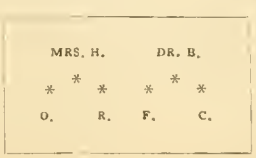
Dr. B. (*To Cec.*) You look very well, Miss Cecily.

Cec. Now that's just what Frothingham said a moment since.

Dr. B. But he spoke as a rhapsodist and I as a physician.

Cec. Yes; Frothingham deals in confectionary.

Froth. And the doctor?



Cec. In drugs.

Dr. B. Oh, I say; that's too bad. By the way, speaking of drugs, I have just perfected a new invention.

Froth. Heavens! Another!

Dr. B. It's a wonderful thing, I assure you—water charged with ammoniacal gas. Most useful in inducing a sudden reaction. I enclose the liquid in a syphon-jar, like soda-water, you know. Suppose a lady faints in a crowded drawing-room. Good; I pull my syphon from my pocket, gently send a spray into her face, and she revives before there is time for a commotion.

Froth. (*aside.*) Now fancy a man going about a drawing-room in a claw-hammer coat with a syphon in the tail pocket!

Cec. And then when you waltzed the thing would begin to fizz, and everybody would take you for a dynamiter. Ha, ha, ha.

Froth. Ha ha, ha.

Dr. B. Dancing and doctoring go not together. Ha, ha, ha.

Mrs. H. (*Crossing to Left.*) You seem to be having a deal of merriment over here.

Cec. That goes without saying, where the doctor is. (*Aside, to Mrs. H.*) They appear to be absorbed.

Mrs. H. Ssh! He is sympathizing with her headache.

Cec. Yes; he seems sympathetic. Ahem.

Ol. (*To. Riv.*) You say you find our climate trying?

Riv. Your air is harsher, though I doubt not you have less of miasma than the dangerous season brings to Rome.

Ol. My experience there was confined, perhaps, to a safe season.

Riv. And you have lately been in Rome?

Ol. We have but recently returned.

Riv. (*aside.*) Then I am not mistaken in the face. (*aloud.*) 'Tis a great city, Signorina—a city vith a historical perspective; an element, perhaps I should say the *only* element, vich this great country of yours lacks.

Ol. We lack much, but are content with what we possess—the noblest of forests, the grandest of rivers——

Riv. And the fairest of women.

Ol. Of that I am scarcely a judge.

Riv. But certainly an example. Pardon me; you see *I am* a judge.

Ol. Doubtless an adept, sir.

Dr. B. (*Crossing to Right.*) Really, Count, I have to come to you for appreciation. They are disposed to make fun even of my syphon.

Riv. (*aside.*) Pest on his syphon!

Dr. B. I explained it to you at dinner.

Riv. Ah, yes; you have, my dear sir, imparted to me all ze interesting detail.

Ol. Is that the latest invention, doctor?

Dr. B. Up to this time, yes. But I have a cage in my head.

Froth. Heavens! A cage in your head!

Cec. Ha, ha, ha. How awfully jolly!

Dr. B. I mean the *idea* of a cage; for use in the zoological gardens; capable of securely holding a rhinoceros, but easily opened and closed by the smallest child.

Froth. In which case the smallest child would probably let out the rhinoceros to lunch on any other children that happened to be about.

CEC. Ha, ha, ha. How jolly!

FROTH. For the rhinoceros.

MRS. H. Frothingham, you are very literal.

DR. B. Isn't he now?

FROTH. I only keep an eye to contingencies. I knew a fellow once who lamed a ten-thousand-dollar mare trying to test the merits of a new knee-brace.

CEC. Horse talk again.

FROTH. It's my hobby. We all have hobbies, and mine happens to be a hobby-*horse*. The Count and I have doctored up a little wager on Tuesday's races, already.

DR. B. (*aside.*) I call it a pretty big one.

OL. I believe a wager is the ultimate logic among gentlemen, is it not?

CEC. (*aside.*) Modified sarcasm.

FROTH. Oh, a bet on a horse is different from anything else.

CEC. *Comet* is Mr. Herrick's horse, isn't he.

FROTH. Yes, and a splendid horse he is. Bound to beat the field. I regard the case as settled in advance.

CEC. (*aside.*) Poor Count. But then I suppose he can afford to lose.

RIV. Ah, Meester Holland, you quite make me to tremble for my little stake.

DR. B. (*aside.*) Calls five thousand a little stake.

RIV. And really, to speak candidly, I believe you shall win from me; *Comet* is a splendid animal.

FROTH. Of course, Count, if you have changed your mind I wont hold you.

RIV. Oh, oh, my *dear* sir. By no means would I permit any such generosity. Should you win, I shall be the first to congratulate you on your good fortune. *My* stake is a mere bagatelle.

CEC. (*aside.*) The Monte Cristo!

DR. B. (*aside to Froth.*) You are in pretty deep on *Comet*, aren't you?

FROTH. Deeper than I care to admit. If he should lose, it would be rather serious; but then he *can't* lose, you know.

DR. B. You make me anxious.

RIV. Happily we shall not long be kept in suspense. I haf quite a foreboding that it is I who shall have to sign a cheque. You are lucky, is it not?

FROTH. Not always, but this time I think I have you, Count. At all hazards Comet must win.

RIV. (*aside.*) At all hazards Comet must *lose*.

CEC. I think so too, Frothingham.

Dear me! you'll scarcely know what to do with your money after Tuesday.

DR. B. He can spend it all in sending you flowers, Cecily.

FROTH. Eh?

CEC. Pshaw! Speaking of flowers, you ought to see the new hydrangeas. Will you come to the conservatory, everybody?

FROTH. As the person addressed, I reply, *we* will come.

MRS. H. Excellent, Cecily. Olive, dear, will you show the Count the new palms. I shall join you presently. I want to speak a few words here with the doctor.

DR. B. Aha.

OL. I hope flowers don't bore you, Count.

RIV. Nothing can bore me in your society Mees Holland, and flowers least of all.

FROTH. (*aside to Cecily.*) Should you like me to send you some buds, Cecily.

CEC. Oh, yes; long stems, they're so nice for book-markers. Ha, ha, ha.

(*Exeunt Cecily and Frothingham, Left.*)

OL. We shall look for you presently, mamma.

MRS. H. In five minutes, dear.

RIV. (*aside to Olive.*) Your flowers are all so frail in this country, is it not?

OL. They are like ourselves—capable of bearing more than their looks indicate.

RIV. Ah.

(*Exeunt, Olive and Rivelli, Left.*)

MRS. H. I sent them ahead, Doctor, so that I might say a word about a matter that has been troubling me. I suppose you find me a great nuisance, but you know I have no other man of affairs to advise with.

DR. B. My dear Mrs. Holland, I am but too happy to serve you. What is the matter?

MRS. H; Have you yet found a purchaser for the Barrington mortgage?

DR. B. No, but there will be no difficulty—that is——

MRS. H. The fact is, I should like to negotiate it as speedily as possible.

(*Rivelli enters at back and pauses, listening, but unobserved.*)

DR. B. You desire ready money?

MRS. H. Well, Frothingham's losses, you see, and-and-numerous unexpected demands have—

DR. B. Ah, I quite understand, my dear Mrs. Holland. I shall find a purchaser for the mortgage forthwith.

And now if you'll pardon me, I must be off. (*Looking at watch.*) It's want of form I know, but I have an appointment at nine. Please make my excuses to the others.

MRS. H. Certainly. Very sorry to lose you, but a physician is always excusable. And that reminds me that I too am staying too long away. I must go to the conservatory.

RIV. (*Coming down.*) Ahem.

MRS. H. Ah, Count,

RIV. A thousand pardons. I haf come back for Mees Holland's wrap. The air is slightly chill in the conservatory.

(*Rivelli takes up a soft light shawl from the back of one of the chairs.*)

I think this is it.

MRS. H. You are very good, sir. So sorry you must go Doctor.

DR. B. (*Going.*) Madam, I am the loser.

MRS. H. I expect the girls think that I am lost.

RIV. I will follow you in one moment, Signora.

(*Exit Mrs. H., Left.*)

DR. B. Good day, Count. I have left my hat in the ante-room.

RIV. One moment, my dear sir. (*Detaining him as he is about to go.*) Just now as I enter, I accidently overhear words of a certain leetle mortgage, is it not? There, there, I would haf at once retire but it was too late. I could not help but hear. Now, sir, I have means unemployed, and if—perhaps I might serve you.

DR. B. My dear sir, you are certainly extremely kind.

RIV. By no means; ze kindness is to me, to me, sir. I would beg to become the purchaser.

Dr. B. But the rate?

Riv. At such rate as you can negotiate elsewhere, that is all I ask, sir—all I ask,

Dr. B. My dear Count, this is very liberal. I am sure that Mrs. Holland will appreciate —

Riv. Oh—no, no, no, no, no. She must know nothing. It would be a constraint upon our social relation. He who mixes up business with social intercourse unties ze devil very queeck. She must by no means be informed. You can say that you haf made satisfactory arrangement. That is all. You are the practical man for the Signora, is it not?

Dr. B. I may say that I am. Since the death of Mr. Holland, she has depended much upon my counsel in matters of investment and so-forth.

Riv. Oh; then, my dear doctor, perhaps you would do me one leetle favor?

Dr. B. With the greatest pleasure; with the *very* greatest pleasure.

Riv. Thank you. I desire to invest some amounts, but, as you know, I am foreigner. As you have made every investigation for the Signora, perhaps you would advise me as to what securities you have thought best to buy for her account. I could then place my money in the same—eh? you catch my meaning?

Dr. B. Perfectly, perfectly. I'll make you a little schedule of the principal securities at once. You don't care for details, I suppose?

Riv. By no means. (*aside.*) I will make ze detail.

(*Dr. B. sits at small table, R., and writes. Enter at back a servant.*)

Servant. The Count Cavalli's valet waits below. He has brought this. (*Presenting letter.*)

Riv. (*Opening letter.*) Ha. (*aside.*) This is awkward. If he should encounter *her!* But there's no help; I must risk it. (*aloud.*) Show my valet up.

(*Servant bows and exit.*)

(*Aside.*) This is a dangerous business. If he should discover the truth, it would spoil all and rob me of my sweet, *sweet* revenge. One glimpse of her face and his heart would fail him, I am sure of it. How could he suppose, how could anyone have guessed? Ah.

(*Enter, at back, Vernon, dressed as Count Cavalli's valet.*

Ver. Ha, Rivelli, I came——

(*Rivelli suddenly stops him by a gesture, pointing to Doctor Briggs, whom Vernon has not seen. The latter's manner suddenly changes and he bows respectfully to Rivelli.*)

Riv. (*to Vernon.*) Pietro, you have a message for me, is it not?

Ver. Si, signor.

Dr. B. (*Rising.*) There Count. I have given you a statement "En bloc" as we say. I think I have included all the main items. Of course you'll consider it as strictly for your own use.

(*Handing paper.*)

Riv. (*With a deprecatory gesture.*) My dear sir!

Dr. B. And now I must be off.

Riv. The gentleman's hat, Pietro. 'Tis in the ante-room.

Ver. (*With an effort.*) Si, signor.

(*Exit Vernon, R.*)

Dr. B. I shall send you full particulars of the organizat on of the Company, my dear Count.

Riv. You speak of——

Dr. B. The fly-trap concern, you know.

Riv. Oh yes. Pray send me full particulars. I consume with interest.

(*Enter R., Vernon with Dr. Briggs' hat.*)

Dr. B. And I shall have the other instrument executed in the morning.

Riv. I shall be ready, doctor.

(*Dr. B. takes hat and bows himself out at Back.*)

Ver. What instrument is that, Rivelli?

Riv. A trifle of fifty thousand dollars, Signor Vernon.

Ver. And where is that to come from?

Riv. That part of the business pertains to Signor Vernon. (*Bowing low.*)

Ver. Ye gods!

Riv. Oh, 'tis but a commencement, signor. 'Tis an expensive luxury, this revenging oneself upon one's enemies. It comes high, but we must have it, as ze Americans say. Ha, ha, ha.

Ver. Bah! And what is this money for?

Riv. Merely an investment. You will have splendid security—the Hollands' Barrington estate.

Ver. Heavens! How did you manage that?

Riv. Finesse.

Ver. Capital, capital.

Riv. Yes, and income too. Ha, ha, ha.

Ver. We must find out just how their means are invested. But how to do it is the question.

Riv. The answer to which is here.

(*Handing him paper.*)

Ver. What is this?

Riv. Simply a schedule of the securities in which Mrs. Holland has her fortune.

Vel. The devil!

Riv. Precisely, signor. He is ze agent I employ in these leetle affairs.

Ver. Pah! Were it not for the sacred cause I have in hand, my heart and soul would cry out against this bitter scheme; but, as it is——

Riv. As it is——?

V. I will do anything; suffer anything, even the degradation of masquerading as the valet of such a thing as *you!*

Riv. (*Smiling sardonically.*) My best thanks to the Signor.

V. You understand. I would humiliate this woman and her family.

R. Yes, yes, yes. I understand with mathematical accuracy, Signor. The first step to humiliation is poverty, eh?

V. Yes.

R. Poverty begets temptation—difficulty, eh?

V. That is it.

R. Difficulty opens ze door for the bestowal of favors.

V. Precisely.

R. And acceptance of favors puts them in our power.

V. Devil!

R. Thanks.

V. Your logic is perfect. Go on, you shall not want for money.

R. (*aside.*) Dear sainted Sir Hugh.

V. But mark me, Rivelli, no tricks! I have but

a single object in view. You are my instrument for the accomplishment of that alone. If you abuse the liberty I give, it were better for you that you had not been born.

R. I seek but to serve the Signor faithfully. Ha, some one is coming.

V. Remember, no trifling.

(*Enter L. Frothingham.*)

Froth. Ah, Count, I came to hunt you up.

R. I crave pardon; my valet brought me an important message, and I was just giving some necessary directions. (*To Vernon.*) That will do, Pietro; you may go.

V. Si, Signor.

F. Ah, here comes Olive—I suppose to hunt *me* up. Ha, ha, ha.

R. (*aside.*) She! *he* must not see her. (*To Vernon.*) That will do, Pietro; you may go.

V. One moment, Signor. There is something else.

R. Not now.

V. But Signor——

R. (*Sharply.*) Go.

V. (*aside to R.*) How dare you!

R. (*aside to V.*) 'Tis necessary. (*aloud.*) Go at once.

Olive. (*Heard from within.*) I'll return in one moment, mamma.

R. (*aside.*) Perdition!

(*Enter L. Olive; as she enters Rivelli lifts the shawl in his hand so as to conceal her face from Vernon.*)

R. (*Imperatively to Vernon.*) Go!

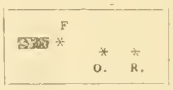
(*Vernon darts an angry glance at him, but restrains himself and bows and exits at Back.*)

R. (*Placing the shawl upon her shoulders.*) A thousand apologies, Signorina.

F. Your servant has a remarkably intelligent face, Count.

R. Yes, a faithful fellow. I picked him up on the Continent. (*To Olive.*) Now, mees, I am once more all to you, will you show me the palms?

(*Frothingham leans upon table at right, with a puzzled expression on his face. Rivelli holds one hand toward Olive, and with the other indicates the direction of the Conservatory. Olive is near the centre of stage, facing Rivelli.*)



END OF ACT I.

ACT II.

Drawing Room of Mrs. Holland as in Act First. Morning.

Olive discovered pacing the room with an open letter in her hand.

Olive. (*sola.*) Pah! These suave phrases,—smoothly turned sentences which express nothing that is real, nothing that is lasting. How I hate them all!

A formal proposal for my hand—addressed to my mother, as though I were a piece of bric-a-brac or a family clock to be transferred, sold or donated. A proposal for a hand which he must surely know cannot carry a heart with it; for the man doesn't lack acuteness of observation, whatever his other failings. And why does he seek me? Love? Hardly. There is something about him which seems to place him outside the reach of ordinary sentiments; something fictitious, hateful. A foreign nobleman who seeks an American wife lays himself open to the suspicion of fortune hunting. And yet he knows of our reverses, and the knowledge seems to have made no difference in his attentions.

The news of this last heavy loss which has prostrated my mother, is followed, almost accompanied—by the Count Cavalli's proposition. I cannot understand it; I cannot bear it! How should I marry a man for whom I can feel nothing but disgust? How take out of my heart the image of that other who——but hush! that thought is buried even from myself; I must not think of that; I must not, I *must* not. Oh! What am I to do?

(*Enter R. Cecily.*)

C. What are you to do? Why, tell me all about it; that's the first thing to do.

O. Ah, Cecily, you may thank Heaven for having given you so light a heart; mine is heavy enough.

C. So I should suppose. When one discovers a girl wringing her hands and asking surrounding space what she's to do, it's a natural inference that her spirits aren't buoyant, to say the least. What's the matter?

O. You have perhaps noticed the manner of Count Cavalli towards me, Cecily, and——

C. Ahem. Just look closely in my eye, will you; it's a good eye; made to see with. Well, I've got two of 'em. And you ask me whether I've noticed Count Cavalli's manner! You're really funny, Olive.

O. Well—in fact—the matter has culminated . .

C. Matters generally do . . . .

O. In—in—a proposal——

C. Of course. You'll look just lovely, dear. Neck décolleté, old Valenciennes at the sleeves and bust; overskirt of cream satin; white ruches, and that string of grandmother Frothingham's pearls. Oh, *do* hurry, won't you? it will be just too dreadfully jolly for words. And then when . . . .

O. For Heaven's sake stop Cecily! You drive me wild! I despise this Count from the depths of my soul. You talk of the whole matter as though it were a fête for the amusement of an idle hour. Can't you see how solemn a thing marriage is?

C. Yes; it's a pretty funereal arrangement sometimes, that's a fact.

O. Can you not find it in your heart to pity me, rather than to start a fusilade of wretched badinage; a torrent of childish words which express little and mean less?

C. Thanks awfully . . .

O. The very thought of this union is hateful to me beyond expression.

C. Then why think about it?

O. Simply because my mother, who has expended life and strength and money for me,—who has reared me in luxury,—educated, protected, planned for me; my mother who has never spared herself when she could do for me,—now asks me to accept this match for *her* sake;—for the sake of the family fortunes, which are broken. My mother, overwhelmed with the disasters that have overtaken us, hands me this letter with the seal of her blessing and commendation upon it, and bids me accept the offer of the Count Cavilli as a repayment of the filial debt I owe to her.

C. That *is* awkward; but surely my aunt does not know . . . .

O. Nor shall she. It is the best proof of my trust in you, dear Cecily, that I confide in your discretion and your silence. Whatever the future may hold in store for me, my mother must never know that which is so bitter within my heart at this moment

C. And you will marry at your mother's bidding, even though you cannot love?

O. I will avoid such a misery if I can find a way to do so; but if the sacrifice of myself is the only escape for us all, then I will make that sacrifice.

C. Even if . . . ?

O. Even if my heart should break.

C. But why should we talk of breaking hearts? You might learn to love even a Count, eh?

O. Never.

C. (*aside.*) There's somebody else. (*aloud.*) That's a long while.

O. Yes, a long while.

C. I wish you wouldn't sigh so sadly, Olive. Why are you so sure you couldn't learn to love him? Is there another occupant in possession?

O. Cecily, it would be kinder to help me than to question me.

C. So I should, if you would be frank. Better make a clean breast of it. If you're in love already, why not say so?

O. It is only school-girls at the bread-and-butter age who imagine themselves in love every time they have an attack of indigestion. I believe that a *woman* least knows when she really loves.

C. Likely. If you'll tell me your exact symptoms I'll let you know just what your condition is.

O. You are very absurd Cecily.

(*Frothingham enters unobserved at back, and pauses.*)

C. That's a good symptom, to begin with. When a girl falls in love, she invariably begins by thinking all other girls absurd. What color are his eyes, Olive?

O. Whose eyes?

C. Why *his*, of course.

O. I dont know whom you mean.

C. Mem: Good symptom number two. A girl in love never knows who is meant when *he* is spoken of. Now tell me, do you feel an indescribable desire to tease him on all occasions? Do you always want to tantalize him just to see how devoted he'll become? Do you treat him the most cavalierly when you feel the tenderest towards him? Because that's the way a girl behaves when she is really in love.

F. (*coming down.*) *Is* it?

C. Ha!

O. Frothingham, you there?

C. Eavesdropping?

F. No, only listening. Ha, ha, ha.

O. And you have heard . . . . ?

F. Only Cecily's vivid description of the way she's been treating *me* for a month. Never heard such an accurate bit of narrative in my life.

O. And you have heard nothing more?

F. Nothing more, on my honor. I entered but a moment ago.

C. Upon my word, sir, your conduct is inexcusable. Besides, I was speaking in a general way. You have no right to make personal applications. I don't know what you mean by alluding to yourself, anyhow.

F. Mem: Good symptom. A girl in love never knows who is meant when *he* is spoken of, eh?

C. Pshaw! You're absolutely silly.

O. (*aside.*) There is no room here for either me or my sorrow.

F. Anyhow, I don't see why you should so persistently snub me.

C. I don't snub you.

F. Well, it *may* be undiluted caressing, but it doesn't seem so. Ah, you are not going, Olive?

O. (*who has moved towards exit.*) Yes, I must see mamma for a few minutes. I want her to come down here for a while for a change.

C. Oh, don't go, Olive; we shall . . . .

O. Be *so* lonely without me; yes, I know. (*aside.*) Happy pair of geese that they are!

C. Don't be absurd . . . .

(*Exit Olive, R.*)

F. Good symptom number two. When a girl falls in love she invariably begins by . . . .

C. Sir!

F. Ha, ha, ha. So you have diagnosed the symptoms of people in love, have you?

C. Go away. I am thoroughly angry with you.

F. Oh.

C. Yes, I am—thoroughly. As if it wasn't my duty to cheer poor Olive up in any way I could. I saw she was terribly down-hearted, and when I rattled off some nonsense, purely as—as—

F. A medicine——

C. Yes, purely as a medicine for—for—

F. For her shattered nerves——

C. Yes, for her shattered nerves, you meanly stole in and listened.

F. Oh—meanly?

C. Yes sir, meanly!

F. Cecily, you shouldn't apply such terms to my actions; it isn't what I have a right to expect.

C. Indeed! And what have you a *right* to expect, I should like to know.

F. You know very well that we have all along understood . . . .

C. Don't say "we," if you please. If you'll have the goodness to speak for yourself . . . .

F. Oh, very well, it won't inconvenience me in the least to do that . . . .

C. Ah, is it so? The truth is out at last then; I've always suspected your sincerity . . I . .

F. Now, don't be rediculous.

C. "Ridiculous." Pardon me, sir, if I say that you are a very poor judge of what is ridiculous . . . .

F. And permit me to remark that your are not well fitted to become a censor.

C. Nor anything else, in your eyes, I suppose.

F. I didn't say so.

C. But that's what you meant.

F. How do you know what I meant?

C. Have you an idea that you're too profound a person to be understood? Ha, ha, ha.

F. I request, Miss Marigold, that you will not laugh in that tone; it's unbearable.

C. Let me inform you, Mr. Holland, that your opinion is of very little consequence to me. Also that there is a limit to what you can say to me.

F. And let *me* remind *you* that even the trodden worm will turn at last.

C. Well, for a worm you're a remarkably healthy specimen.

F. That's not a particle funny.

C. Then I wouldn't listen.

F. I wont.

(*F. seats himself angrily at right and takes up newspaper.*)

C. You wont have occasion. I shall not speak another word to you this day.

(*C. seats herself angrily at left, with her back towards F. She takes up embroidery and stitches wildly. A pause.*)

C. Besides, I don't see why . . . .

F. Hey?

C. Nothing. (*aside.*) Pah!

(*Another pause, during which each steals a look at the other. Once their eyes meet and each suddenly turns, F feigning to be absorbed in his newspaper and C. in her work.*)

C. Just as if you had any right . . . .

F. Hey?

C. Nothing!

F. Ha! (*aside.*) How pretty her profile is. Confound it all!

C. (*aside.*) He deserved a good lesson.

(*A pause.*)

Guess he'll not assume so much next time.

(*A pause.*)

I oughn't to have called him *mean*, though. He never was *that*.

F. Seems to me, Miss Marigold . . . .

C. Hey?

F. Nothing. (*aside.*) Wonder how long she means to keep it up.

(*A pause.*)

C. (*aside.*) If he'd say he was sorry.

(*A pause.*)

F. (*aside.*) I can't stand this sort of thing very long. (*aloud.*) Ahem. Did you speak?

C. I did not sir.

F. Oh, pardon me

C. Don't mention it. (*aside.*) He's thawing.

(*A pause.*)

C. Did you make a remark, sir?

F. Eh! I beg pardon, I was absorbed in the European despatches.

C. Pray don't let *me* interfere with anything so entertaining.

F. (*aside.*) She's softening.

(*A pause.*)

C. (*aside.*) It's just contemptible in him to stick it out in this fashion.

F. Ha, ha, ha. It's very amusing, I declare.

C. Sir, I?

F. No; the Tory debate in the House of Commons.

(*He buries himself in his newspaper.*)

C. Oh. (*aside.*) I wonder if he thinks he can fool me that way.

(*She buries herself in her embroidery.*)

(*A pause.*)

C. Tut, tut; it's too perplexing!

F. I?

C. No, this stich. Pray go on with your despatches. (*aside.*) Had him there.

F. Oh. (*aside.*) Little fiend!

(*A pause.*)

C. You know very well that is *was* mean in you to steal in and listen to what I said to Olive.

F. (*aside.*) Thank goodness! I was on the point of knocking under. (*aloud.*) Upon my word, I came upon you quite by accident, and then, when I heard you so accurately describing your own treatment of *me*, I couldn't choose but listen.

C. I never treated you that way . . . .

F. Indeed you have. Snubbed me to distraction. Don't you remember . . . . ? (*He crosses.*)

C. It isn't at all necessary for you to sit so close, *Mr.* Holland.

F. Oh, excuse me, *Miss* Marigold. Will that do?

C. That's better.

F. Surely you remember the innumerable occasions when you have cut me off short in the middle of my most ardent protestations, when . . .

C. You had no business to make ardent protestations . . (*aside.*) The dear fellow!

F. Not when I . . . . ?

C. Ahem. I beg pardon. What about *Comet?* This is the day, isn't it?

F. Now there you go again. Just when I was going to say something poetical you ask me about the races. It's maddening, Cecily . . . .

C. Ah—I beg pardon . . . .

F. I mean *Miss Marigold*. Can't a fellow descant on the affections without being brought up with a round turn . . . .

C. "Brought up with a round turn!" Now there's a poetical phrase for you! Ugh! Besides, who ever heard of a *square* turn?

F. It's your fault; you're enough to turn a chap gray!

C. Thank you, *Mr.* Holland . . . .

F. With your enchanting witcheries, eh?

C. Oh, that's better. (*aside.*) I could hug him when he talks like that.

F. As to the races, they are over by this, I suppose. I'm expecting a telegram every moment. I sent Hopkins down and he'll telegraph me direct from the field, so I shall soon be out of misery on that score. But as to the other matter . . . .

C. The affections . . . .

F. Precisely. You seem determined to keep me perennially on the anxious bench.

C. I don't comprehend what *I* have to do with it, I'm sure.

C. No? Then I'll explain. To begin with I'm a fellow who does nothing by halves . . . .

C. So I should suppose.

F. (*aside.*) Now what the deuce does she mean by that? (*aloud.*) If—if—I like a girl,—er—I like her . . . .

C. Surprising!

F. (*aside.*) More covert satire! (*aloud.*) Now . . I—er—like *you* . . . .

C. Therefore . . . .

F. I *like* you.

C Extraordinary!

F. What? The fact or the logic?

C. Both. Go on.

F. Well, it's particularly hard on such a fellow when a girl is continually making game of him. It's dispiriting, you know.

C. Yes? (*aside.*) I've got him where I want him.

F. It is, indeed. And besides, it isn't always safe for the *girl.*

C. Eh!

F. (*aside.*) I think I have her nicely. (*aloud.*) Fact, I assure you. You remember the fairy tale of the Lady of the Valley Beautiful?

C. No. Do tell it to me.

F. I'm not good at rhetorical flourishes, but the pith of the story is that there was once a beautiful lady who lived in the Valley Beautiful and who, of course, had many admirers. But the most devoted among them was a knight who had nothing to offer but a strong arm and the devotion of an honest heart . . . .

C. Enough for any woman . . . .

F. You think so? Well, the Knight was so devoted that he finally won the love of the lady, but she was by nature a coquette;—You know what a coquette is, I suppose?

C. *Coquette, Coquette . . .?* Oh yes, made of chopped chicken, isn't it?

F. Cecily!

C. Sir!

F. Beg pardon,—*Miss* Marigold.

C. Ah.

F. As I was saying, the lady loved to dally and tantalize and play with her adorer, just like—er—a kitten with a mouse . . . .

C. Or a spider with a fly . . . .

F. Or——

C. Never mind the similes; go on with the story.

F. But the true-hearted Knight continued his suit . . . .

C. Quite right in him.

F. You think so?

C. Yes —that is—it *was* all right in a fairy tale. Fairy tales are such mediæval things, you know, and mediæval people had such queer ideas. You see what I mean?

F. (*aside.*) I think I do. (*aloud.*) The Knight, as I was saying, continued his suit. He plead his cause with eloquence——with ardor——

C. How jolly!

F. For him?

C. No; for her.

F. Ah. He poured out his love in verses . . .

C. Delightful!

F. And made no end of sonnets to her eyebrow . . . .

L. Had she only one?

F. No, she had one over each eye, but a sonnet could only hold one at a time.

C. Oh, I see.

F. So did she; but all the same she remained adamant . . . .

C. That was hard . . . .

F. And is so still. Well, so it went on till at last he took to serenading her nightly.

C. How romantic!

F. Yes, and rheumatic too.

C. What, for her?

F. No, for him.

C. Oh.

F. Well, it at last it conquered . . . .

C. The romance?

F. No, the rheumatism. He dropped the guitar from his hands and took the *ca*tarrh on his chest . . . .

C. That's vile!

F. The catarrh?

C. No, the pun.

F. Yes, all puns are. To resume, the Knight became ill, but still the Lady of the Valley Beautiful gave no sign, though she loved him, mind you, all the time.

C. Of course. Any fool might know that . . .

F. Ahem . . . .

C. That is . . in . . a fairy tale.

F. Then, when he got well he renewed his suit, but she hesitated to say yes.

C. Then he asked a second time and . . . .

F. Nothing of the kind. He immediately married a wealthy widow who lived on the hill.

C. The brute!

F. The widow?

C. No, the Knight.

F. But what about the Lady of the Valley Beautiful?

C. She was just like other women,—like to be wooed.

F. Oh, she was, was she?

C. That is—in—a—er fairy tale . . . .

F. And so, if I should find a Lady of the Valley Beautiful, and make love to her and write verses and make sonnets . . . .

C. To *both* her eyebrows, please . . . .

F. Yes, to *both* her eyebrows. And serenade her . . . .

C. Oh yes, I'm *so* fond of music on the night air . . . .

F. *You?*

C. That is—oh!—

(*C. jumps up embarassed and runs out at left. F. tries to stop her but fails.*)

F. (*solus.*) Bewitching little creature!

(*A sudden knock at the door. C.*)

Ha! Come in.

(*A servant hands in a telegram, and exit.*)

F. (*solus.*) Ha! From Hopkins! I'm absolutely sure that *Comet* must have won, but—how a fellow's hand shakes sometimes! There's so much at stake. But of course it's a sure thing, Pshaw! This is womanish!

(*He resolutely opens telegram and starts.*)

Great Heaven! "*Comet* has lost by a neck." My mother! How am I to tell *her?* Oh fool, fool, fool!

(*Enter R, Mrs. Holland leaning on Olive's arm.*)

O. I'm sure you'll feel better soon, mamma. You had best sit here for a while; you are hardly fit for exercise to-day.

Mrs. H. No, I am weaker than I thought, dear.

(*Frothingham pushes chair for her.*)

Thanks, Frothingham; I scarcely expected to find you here at this hour.

F. No . . I—I . .

Mrs. H. Ah. What is the matter my son? You look pale - troubled.

F. Oh nothing, - nothing, I assure you. I was up late last night, and—and . . . .

O. (*aside.*) What can have happened?

Mrs H. But there is something. Ha! That letter in your hand,—a telegram,—it *is* a telegram. Something is the matter. You cannot deceive me even if you would. Speak; I have learned to bear so much that your news can hardly make me worse. What has happened?

F. Do not ask . . . .

Mrs. H. I demand to know.

F. *Comet* . . . .

O. Has lost?

F. Has lost.

Mrs. H. Oh!

O. Give her a glass of water.

Mrs. H. No. I need nothing. See, I am strong, strong. I—I—had hoped that we should have saved something out of the wreck of our property; but now, even that remnant must go. After all, it is only a matter of accounting. Do not grieve.

O. My poor mother! (*aside.*) The sacrifice is mine!

F. Believe me, mother, I am overwhelmed with sorrow. What would you have me do?

Mrs. H. Pay your losses like a man and a gentleman. The honor of your father's name must never know a taint. I thank heaven that though our fortune has crumbled away like ashes, we are still able to pay cent per cent. The cash on deposit with Du Barry & Co., is still untouched and will meet your losses. Hand me that cheque-book.

F. Alas! Mother, I cannot bear . . . .

Mrs. H. Be good enough to oblige me; thank you. Now take pen and paper and foot up the amount. Come, I am weak. Be quick, my son.

(*Froth seats himself at table and makes hasty memoranda. Mrs. H. prepares to write out a cheque.*)

O. (*aside to Mrs. H.*) How can *I* help you mamma?

Mrs. H. My dear child, you are powerless except

O. (*aside.*) And that one way is worse to me than death. (*aloud.*) I will try to do my best.

Mrs. H. If you try, you will succeed: those who really *try* always do.

F. (*rising and handing paper to Mrs. H.*) There is the terrible truth, mother. I must face it, though it cuts me to the soul.

Mrs. H. Thank heaven that honor still remains in one way. If you choose that way, your power is nearly immeasurable.

(*writing cheque.*)

F. It will absorb nearly the entire balance at Du Barry's . . . .

Mrs. H. Yes. But let us be grateful that we have the balance there to draw upon. My signiture to this little piece of paper makes it as good as bank notes or gold. There my son . . . .

(*hands him cheque.*)

F. This means penury . . . .

Mrs. H. This means honesty. Go.

The voice of Dr. Briggs is heard from without: No, never mind announcing me. I must go in at once.

O. Ah! The doctor . . . .

(*Enter hastily at back, Dr. Briggs.*)

Dr. B. Ah! Olive my child; Frothingham; my dear Mrs. Holland . . . .

F. What is it, doctor? You look flustered——

Mrs. H. For heaven's sake, doctor, speak! Is there any new disaster?

Dr. B. My dear friend, are you able to bear a piece of most unwelcome intelligence?

Mrs. H. I am able to bear anything except suspense. Speak.

Dr. B. I hardly dare to; and yet—and yet you *must* know. I beg you to fortify yourself for bad news.

O. In mercy be quick.

Dr. B. Du Barry & Co. have just failed for two millions.

Mrs. H. (*partly rising.*) Oh Heaven! And—and—the depositors——?

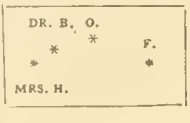
Dr. B. Will receive nothing.

F. (*staring wildly at the cheque in his hand.*) Worthless!

(*Mrs. H. utters a cry and swooms in her chair.*)

O. (*falling on her knees at centre.*) It *must* be done.

(*Dr. B. leans over Mrs. H., feels her pulse, then hastily draws a syphon-jar from his coat-tail pocket and plays the contents over her. Quick curtain.*



END OF ACT SECOND.

ACT III.

Quarters of the "Count Cavalli," in New York. One of a suite of apartments. Doorways right and left, leading to communicating rooms. At back a sash window-door, (practicable) leading to balcony without. A curtained alcove at left back. One or two works of art on easels. An ottoman near centre of room. A small table at right with decanter of wine and glasses. Chimney place with fire at right. An easy chair in front of it. Lighted lamps on table. As the curtain rises, Rivelli is in the act of pouring out a glass of wine, which he drinks before speaking. ——

R. (*solus.*) What a power is money! A man may struggle all his life for *fame*, and perhaps—if he is *very* lucky—he will get a complimentary epitaph on his tombstone. But with money, he is a king at the start.

As Tonio Rivelli I am a lackey, with great aspirations and a deep grudge; as the Count Cavalli, with the late lamented Sir Hugh's millions at my back, I bend events to my liking. It is my will to ruin the family of Holland, and the family of Holland is accordingly ruined. The son bets heavily on the right horse; by a judicious expenditure of money, the jockey is induced to lose the race by a neck, and the son loses a fortune as the result. The daughter would fain marry according to her own wishes; I apply my little wand of Midas, and she marries according to mine. The Signora needs money on her estate, I advance it and ze estate is in my power; she places her funds with the banking house of Du Barry, not knowing that the firm is my debtor to an enormous amount; good; I call my loan at sight, the firm cannot respond, I sell my security and bankrupt the firm; the Signora loses a fortune as the result. Ha, ha, ha. Money! money!

And do you think, Master Eustace Vernon that it is for *you* I do this vat you call "bitter business?" No, it is *against* you. You think I would marry this Miss Holland so that you can then tell her and her mother the truth—that I am but a paid lackey. That you can crush them beneath their humiliation. That you can avenge the wrongs of Sir Hugh Calvert upon this whole family. You little know that this girl is your ideal, —your Stella,—for whose welfare you would willingly lay down your life;—whose features you have painted on your canvas in Rome! It is ze irony of fate, Master Vernon! You once struck me, *me*, on ze face with your riding-whip. Ze scar is yet here, and it *burns* me even as I think! I have learned to wait—for my revenge. It will come ven I present you to your ideal as *my wife!* Ha, ha, ha. *My* wife! Made my wife by your own intrigue,—by your own money! Ha, ha, ha. 'Tis as good as a stage piece. Zese people are my puppets—all—; Vernon with his artistic sense, the Signora with her family pride,—the Docteur with his patents, poor old fool ——

(*A knock at left.*)

Ah. Come in.

(*Enter L, Dr. Briggs.*)

An unexpected happiness. Be seated my dear Docteur.

Dr. B. My dear Count, my visit can scarcely be termed happiness, seeing that my news is bad.

R. So! The Signora is ill?

Dr. B. In mind—very. The fact is, Count, a series of financial disasters has completely prostrated her. It is as though some evil genius had taken charge of the destinies of the family ——

R. But how *could* there be an evil genius to so excellent a family? It is impossible that any one could wish them aught but good.

Dr. B. To your kind heart it doubtless appears so; as indeed it does to mine. It is really incomprehensible. Mrs. Holland is . . . .

R. So kind; so charming; so free from every defect and . . . .

Dr. B. And Olive so sweet and . . . .

R. Ah! I dare not trust myself to speak of her, till I can call her my wife.

Dr. B. In that matter, my dear sir, you have my hearty sympathy, as you well know.

R. Of course *then* I shall be in a position to do much which etiquette would forbid me even to suggest now.

Dr. B. Of course. I think that Olive's scruples are only maidenly, and she will now, I think, see the wisdom of yielding to a suit which so honors the family.

R. And you say there has been a succession of misfortunes?

Dr. B. As you know, Frothingham has lost a fortune on *Comet* . . . .

R. Ah yes, I am aware. Unfortunately, in a mere moment of frolic, I made him a leetle wager on ze horse,—only a small part of his loss, however. I really thought he was sure to win. *Comet* was the favorite against the field.

Dr. B. Yes, it's incomprehensible, unless the jocky has been tampered with ——

R. What! You mean to tell me that such a thing is possible! I am shocked continually to note the want of morality in your American sporting circles. Why, my dear sir, in Europe such a piece of villany would be found out and punished to the extent of severity. Such a thing would be impossible with *us!*

Dr. B. I am sorry to admit that with *us*, such rascality does sometimes occur.

R. Tut, tut, tut.

Dr. B. What we are at present concerned about, is the fact that the race is lost. Mrs. Hollond was already seriously embarassed by the crash in Western railroad shares, and has had hard work to save Frothingham from discreditable failure.

But, worst of all, has come the suspension of Du Barry & Co. The entire available funds of the family are on deposit with the firm, and I cannot allow myself to even guess at the consequence.

R. What! Du Barry failed! Heavens! I haf all my surplus with him!

Dr. B. My dear sir, I am aghast!

R. This is bad news indeed, I fear it shall press me in the matter of that leetle mortgage vich I hold . . . .

Dr. B. Good Gracious! Count, I hope not. I count rather upon your aid than upon your demands.

R. Oh, I shall do my best. Of course, if I marry it will alter ze aspect of affairs. In that case I shall present the mortgage to *my wife*,—— you understood?

Dr. B. (*aside.*) That settles it. Olive *must* accept

him (*aloud*) Yes, Count I quite understand. Doubtless you are right.

R. You can see that action must be immediate.

Dr. B. Yes, yes. I see. If the present difficulty can be tided over I believe the future is secure. Mrs. Holland has one certain means of retrieving her fortunes.

R. Ha!

Dr. B. Yes. My patents. You know she has a large interest in them.

R. (*aside.*) I breathe freely. (*aloud.*) Yes, oh yes; doubtless they are her best chance. You are so ingenious, is it not?

Dr. B. I am simply an unpretending man of science; but there is a great future for my patents.

(*He draws a small instrument from his pocket.*)

Here now is a little instrument for testing the humidity of the atmosphere.

R. (*aside.*) Oh! He is off again.

Dr. B. It's not entirely perfected yet, but I've got it into fair working order.

R. Ah. How interesting!

(*aside*) He has forgotten all about the troubles of the family. Ha, ha, ha.

Dr. B. You see this dial. Note the figures please. Now I'll give you a practical demonstration of its operation, if you'll permit me to step out on this balcony for a few moments. When I return you can perceive at a glance the relative percentage of moisture outside as compared with this room.

R. Very good, very good, my dear doctor. I shall consume with impatience to witness so interesting an experiment.

Dr. B. You are a man of scientific instinct, Count, of rarely scientific instinct.

R. Ah.

(*Exit Dr. B. to Balcony, at back.*)

R. (*solus.*) Ze old idiot! He bore me vith machines to register moisture in ze air. Can he invent a machine to register the hate in my heart? The hate for the man who has disgraced me by a blow—who patronizes me as his inferior,—who has educated me only that I may the more keenly feel my humiliation? For the man who *uses* me as the worthless instrument of his own revenge? Malediction! We shall see. Your spear is a boomerang, Master Vernon; it shall return to wound yourself—even unto death. Ah!

(*The voice of Vernon, off R. is heard calling "Rivelli"*)

I do not want him to question me till I get my letter written. He shall not find me here.

(*Exit Rivelli hastily at R. U. E. Enter Vernon at R. I. E.*)

V. (*solus.*) Not here! I thought I heard him. Ah well, perhaps it's not to be regretted. That man's manner has something in it that is not soothing to a soul already full of tempest. Bah! What a cold draught from somewhere. Ah! the balcony window is not quite closed.

(*He closes and securely bolts the window door.*)

There's a feeling of snow in the air to-night, and it's growing colder.

(*A sound of wind and rain without.*)

Yes, there comes the sleet; it's a fitting accompaniment to my thoughts, a fitting background to the work of this Rivelli. I wonder where he is. It's important I should learn the exact state of affairs.

(*Calls.*) Rivelli, Rivelli.

(*Exit Vernon, R. I. E.*)

(*The sound of increasing storm heard from without. A hard knocking is heard at the balcony window.*)

Dr. B. (*from the balcony.*) Count, I say Count, let me in.

(*There is a pause, during which hail and wind are heard without.*)

Dr. B. (*from the balcony.*) Count Cavalli, where the deuce are you? It's raining cats and puppies out here. For heaven's sake, open the window.

(*He shakes window violently.*)

(*Another pause and increasing sounds of storm.*)

Dr. B. (*from the balcony.*) I say, I am drenched to the skin. Let me in.

(*Sounds of storm increase.*)

Dr. B. (*from the balcony*) Murder! Help! Thieves! Let me in.

(*The sounds of storm continue at intervals during the remainder of the Act.*

(*Re-enter at R. I. E. Vernon.*)

V. (*solus.*) Gone! But where? His capacity for mischief can always be trusted, but I dare not give him too free a rein. He seems very devoted to my cause, and yet there is a sardonic tone about his words which stings me at times, like a whip. He appears to revel in the details of this scheme of ruin, which to me is utterly revolting. Would to heaven there were some way to keep my promise to my dead benefactor without resorting to the methods of the midnight assassin! I feel like the bandit in whose ears must ring the cry of his victim—

Dr. B. (*heard from the balcony.*) Murder! Murder! Theives! Robbers!

V. Ha! Oh! Great Heavens! What was that! (*A pause.*) Faugh! my imagination is strained. My brain is on fire. What a fool I am!

(*Warming his hands before the fire.*)

Ah, it's a good night to be within doors.

(*Pounding heard on the balcony.*)

What was *that?* I could have sworn I heard a knocking somewhere. I suppose it was the wind. The storm seems to be settling down to work in earnest. Let me think quietly (*seated in arm chair.*) for a few minutes.

Dr. B. (*from balcony.*) Murder! Help! Thieves! Let me in.

V. (*springing up.*) Surely this is no delusion.

Dr. B. (*from balcony.*) Let me in! I'm frozen! soaked! It's doing everything at once out here. Let me in.

V. Where are you?

Dr. B. On the balcony.

V. (*going to balcony window and raising shades.*) Who are you?

Dr. B. Oh! I'm a sponge! Let me in for the love of heaven!

(*Vernon opens window and admits Dr. B. who is soaked with rain and covered with snow. His hat is over his ears and mashed in.*)

Dr. B. (*struggling to get his hat off so that he can see.*) Count Cavalli, this is the most extraordin-

ary treatment— Oh! who are you?

V. I, sir, am—

Dr. B. Oh yes, I see; you're the Count's servant. I remember your face.

V. Yes sir, I–I–am–the Count's servant. (*aside.*) But I came near forgetting it. (*aloud.*) You sir, are, I think, Dr. Briggs?

Dr. B. I *was* Dr. Briggs; I am now a mass of pulp! Look at me; look at me, sir. Soaked! Drenched! Literally taken up in solution! It's the most extraordinary experience I ever had in my life. I go to the balcony to test the value of my new apparatus for registering moisture—

V. (*touching him.*) Did you say moisture?

Dr. B. (*taking off his necktie and wringing it out.*) Yes sir, *moisture*. The Count locks me out and leaves the room. I get interested in the operation of my invention, and the first thing I know I am out in a blizzard—a regular Dakota blizzard! The machine works splendidly till—

V. Is *that* the machine?

Dr. B. That *was* the machine. It is now a wreck! It burst its bulb in the vain attempt to register the moisture fast enough.

V. (*laughing.*) Upon my word, Doctor, you do look a little disorganized.

Dr. B. Don't laugh at me, sir. You forget your place.

V. (*angrily.*) Sir, you'll oblige me by not using that tone to me. I'm not used— (*aside.*) Ssh! I *am* forgetting, true enough.

Dr. B. Insolent! A valet!

V. (*with an humble manner.*) I–I–crave your pardon, Signor–I for the moment, as it were—pray excuse me.

Dr. B. Look at that hat! (*He runs his hand through the crown.*)

V. If you will step this way, I can perhaps find some change of clothing for you till you can at least reach your own quarters, sir.

Dr. B. Very good. I shall certainly be glad to get anything that's dry. (*aside.*) If I only had had one of Canon Ashton's sermons now!

(*Exeunt R. I. E. Dr. B. and Vernon. A moment later, enter, at R. U. E., Rivelli, with an open letter in his hand.*)

R. (*solus.*) It is written now, and once having been put down in black and white, there is less chance of an alteration of our plans. (*glancing at letter.*) I think I haf made myself plain to the Signora; and, even were circumstance different, I am quite sure she desires to have her daughter known as *Countess*. The dream will have a rather abrupt awakening. Ha, ha. But that is not my responsibility. Signor Vernon must answer ze awkward questions; tis I who shall be the bridegroom of his cherished ideal; *I* who shall possess her! Vat you say to that Rivelli? Is there nothing in the thought of *that* except a gratified revenge? Pah! She is beautiful; I am but a man! Yes, yes—Tonio! Tonio Rivelli! Your pulse grows too quick for your purposes. Stop! Be calm! Calm! You can *wait!* You *must* wait for love—as for revenge. But I would not wait *long!* No! I would be queeck! Ah! Signor.

(*Enter, R. I. E., Vernon.*)

V. Rivelli, I have sought you in vain. Where have you been? Surely you were not out in this storm?

R. No, Signor, I was in the smoking-room, writing.

V. I believe that is the only place where I didn't look for you.

R. I regret not to have heard the Signor.

V. What do you mean by your extraordinary treatment of Dr. Briggs?

R. Dr. Briggs! (*going towards balcony.*) Oh! He stepped on to ze balcony and I forget him and leave ze room.

V. Oh, you needn't look there. I have brought him in and have put him in the next room to dry.

R. But why did he stay out? I left open ze window.

V. Well, now that you mention it, I believe I fastened the window myself. It was so wretchedly draughty here.

R. Oh, the poor docteur! Ha, ha, ha.

V. *He* didn't find it a laughing matter. I have fixed him up with some of my traps, but I fear the fit is far from perfect.

R. *I* had best assume the responsibility, Signor; and I will send for a cab, and accompany him home, by way of amends. Meanwhile, I will despatch this letter vich I haf just written to the Signora Holland. I am bringing matters to a rapid crisis, Signor.

V. I am not sure that it's not *too* rapid. What do you propose?

R. Matrimony.

V. True. That was *my* proposition. But you don't mean *at once?*

R. At once. There is no time like the present, especially for trifling affairs. Ha, ha, ha,

V. Rivelli, I believe your heart is steel.

R. No, only iron. On my honor, Signor, only iron.

V. And how will you accomplish this?

R. By giving them the choice of evils. It is I or ruin. I think they will choose me. Ruin, you know, is so uncompromising a ruffian; while I —well really I am not so bad, eh? (*poses.*)

V. Fiend!

R. Thanks.

V. And you first dig the pit for them, and then compel them to accept you as their deliverer!

R. You have a remarkably clear head for logic, Signor.

V. Man! Man!

R. Thanks. A moment ago I was a fiend; now a man. Doubtless you shall call me Angel upon ze next outburst of emotion. Ha, ha, ha.

V. I am in no mood for jesting. What is the present condition of affairs?

R. The fortune of the Holland family has ceased to exist.

V. All?

R. All. Disappeared, vanished, evaporated into thin air. I obtained control of everything but the cash, and disposed of *that* by breaking the bank in which it was deposited. It is as easy as the step of the last waltz, ven once one knows how to do it. Ha, ha, ha.

V. By heavens! It's pitiable. I can go no further—

R. Pardon me if I suggest that there does not appear to be much further to go.

V. Yes; you would marry the daughter and break her heart:

R. As if marrying *me* could do that! A woman's heart is much less easy to break than a bank. It's *circulation* is less extended. Ha, ha, ha.

V. But I tell you I shall not permit it. I cannot ruin the lives of these people.

R. Oh no; be merciful. I would. The Signora was *so* merciful to Sir Hugh!

V. True. You say true, Rivelli. She was inhuman to him; she did not spare him.

R. No.

V. She deliberately wrecked his happiness.

R. She did.

V. She trampled under her feet the appeals of the man who loved her with the sole devotion of his life.

R. Ay! with *scorn* she trampled them!

V. And yet—

R. And yet?

V. My soul revolts at this retaliation, Man! Do you not see how I seek to excuse myself from this horrible task? Yet you give me no encouragement. You goad me on to evil. If I speak of Mrs. Holland's cruelty, you accentuate each word; if I suggest clemency, you sneer. By heavens! I think I could kill you.

R. Do so; and prove again the ingratitude of those who are faithfully served. I do your bidding; work out your own scheme; help you to keep your own solemn vow. And for that you would kill me! Well! I can die.

V. Forgive me Rivelli. You see I am nearly mad. When you speak of my vow you recall my solemn obligation to the dead. You know well how to touch the right chord. I shall carry out the work of my benefactor to the bitter end. Go on; finish the business; but for the love of heaven be quick.

R. Aha! Spoken like yourself, Signor. I shall not lag; trust me for that.

V. There is but one thing I desire. I have never seen the face of this Miss Holland. You must contrive for me to do so.

R. (*quickly.*) Oh, no, no, no, no. It would not do. It-it might unnerve you. (*aside.*) most likely it would!

V. But—

R. I tell you, Signor, it would never do. You would risk the success of the whole enterprise. You would imagine she was pale—interesting, perhaps. Your heart would misgive you. (*aside.*) What could have put such a troublesome notion into his head?

V. Is she beautiful?

R. Quite the reverse. She is very coarse—a red-faced, strongly built creature. Most uninteresting, I assure you.

V. Her figure?

R. *Embonpoint* in all the wrong places!

V. Her hair?

R. Straight—and very thin at the parting.

V. Her eyes?

R. Her eyes-ah-let me think. I never *could* quite tell their color because of her dreadful squeent.

V. Squint!

R. Oh, terrible! And, on my honor, her complexion is very like an ancient tomato. To think of marrying an ancient tomato!

V. Ye gods!

R. Yes. And you question my devotion to your service? Oh ingratitude! ingratitude! Ha, ha, ha.

V. Ah, 'tis well for you to laugh; I cannot do so. I do not think that I shall ever laugh again.

R. My dear Signor, your liver is out of order. Take a grain of calomel a day for three days; and meanwhile I shall marry the lady Believe me, your dose will be the pleasanter of the two. Ha, ha, ha. (*goes to window.*) Still storming. I must despatch my letter, and you may expect great news to-morrow. Courage! your triumph is near at hand. And now I will look after a cab for the poor docteur—unless the Signor has some further command.

V. No, I have nothing further. Good night.

(*Exit Rivelli R. U. E.*)

Ah stay, Rivelli,—no, he has gone. I would have called him back and prevented the sending of that letter. But no, why fight against manifest destiny? That, I believe is what the metaphysicians term it. Pah! I'm as weak as water.

(*He lights a cigarette and seats himself before the fire.*)

This Miss Holland must be very plain. What a contrast to the face of Stella. Shall I ever behold her again? Alas! what a bitter thing is life. Ugh! How the wind blows! It must be very cold out there. (*He stirs the fire.*) Very, very cold! But *here* it is at least warm, even though there be no peace for *me*. How the little flametongues lick, and eat and eat. They say life is a flame—and is not the heart of man but fuel? What a problem! What a problem! I'm very sleepy. Heaven knows I need rest. I wonder-I wonder what the end of it all-will be. Ah Stella, my love, my unknown love.

(*He gradually falls asleep. For a few moments only the sounds of the storm are heard. Then there is a knock at the door, Left; then a pause and another knock. Vernon stirs in his sleep but does not awaken. Another knock, and then the door is timidly opened, and enter Stella, thinly and poorly clad and wet with rain and snow. She draws her slight cloak tightly about her.*)

Stella. No one here. But, yes—a gentleman, —and asleep! Oh! what shall I say when he wakes?

V. (*murmuring in his sleep.*) Stella! Stella!

S. Ha! My name!

Oh! I must go away again; but where? Out into that pitiless storm! I cannot. Oh! I am so cold! If only I could get some of the blessed heat of the fire I might be able to face the rain and snow. But I am numb; I dare not go-just yet.

(*She passes up stage, regarding Vernon intently.*)

V. (*suddenly waking.*) Ha! Who's there?

(*Stella shrinks back unobserved.*)

Ugh! what a horrible dream! First the face of my beautiful Stella—sad and stained with tears. And when I tried to learn the cause of her sorrow she reached her hands to me with such a piteous movement! And then, when I pleaded to know what I should do to help her there came to her lips a cry of pain, and as her form died away into mist, her finger pointed to the figure of a woman, shivering with cold—helpless, appealing—a woman in tattered garments, who held her wretched cloak about her and crouched in the snow. And then-then-a

sound of knocking somewhere, and the sob of the wind—and then— Good God!

(*Vernon has turned, and suddenly sees Stella. She is kneeling, up stage, in the attitude described by him.*)

Who are *you?*

S. Oh, sir, forgive me. I haf no right here. I am—I am—

V. (*aside.*) The crouching woman of my dream!

S. I haf sought to find this house for two days, Signor, and it is only tonight that I haf succeeded. I would have gone away again, but I was so cold, and so tired, and—and—

(*She rises to her feet, but nearly falls. Vernon assists her to a chair.*)

Thanks, Signor, I didn't know I was so weak. I shall be better in a moment.

V. My poor girl, who are you?

S. I am Italian, Signor. I haf but a little while reach this land. I earned passage in the steerage by working in the scullery. That was my only means to come—and I had to come at once. I brought with me my child, and a poor woman is caring for him till I can find help.

V. Your child?

S. Yes.

V. You are little more than a child yourself.

S. Alas! Signor, I am all a *woman* in sorrow.

V. Poor girl! I pity you,

S. Bless you for that word. It is warmer than the fire. It makes me brave.

V. (*aside.*) The same old tale of wrong. It's sadder than tears. (*aloud.*) Where is the child's father?

S. Here—in America somewhere. In New York I think. He deserted me, spurned me, *struck* me, Signor. I haf followed him to America. I have no friends. I heard that these apartments were let to a wealthy Italian gentleman and I have sought him out to see if he will have mercy upon a countrywoman in great distress—a countrywoman though a peasant.

V. And what is your purpose?

S. To find my husband, and—

V. Your *husband?* (*aside.*) I wish she would not try thus to deceive me.

S. Ay. And to force him to do me justice; to take the stain from his child.

V. Well, you shall certainly have shelter here—for the present at least. But you must know that I am not the master of this establishment. These rooms are rented by the Count Cavalli.

S. And *you* are ——?

V. I am I am-the Count Cavalli's valet.

S. But you are noble of soul, Signor.

V. What are you called?

S. Stella, Signor.

V. (*starting.*) Stella!

S. Ay. 'Tis a usual name with us

V. Yes, yes. In Rome I—

S. And you have been in Rome?

V. Yes. I knew a Stella there; that is-there is a lady there whom-whom—

S. Whom you knew?

V. No. Whom I did *not* know, but—

S. But whose name was Stella?

V. No, whose name was not Stella. (*aside.*) Confound it! What am I trying to say? (*aloud.*) I knew by sight a beautiful lady in Rome, whose face I painted from memory, and whom I called *Stella*, because her image was so bright to me.

S. Painted! You are an artist!

V. Yes.

S. And yet a valet?

V. No. Yes. That is— never mind what I am. Let me be only a gentleman at present, and do what I may to make you comfortable. Are you warmer?

S. Indeed yes. The fire—it is so bright and beautiful.

V. Take this glass of wine. Perhaps it may strenghten you.

(*He gives her wine.*)

S. Signor you are too good to me. I shall not forget. I never forget a kindness nor a wrong. No, never a wrong! All things come even at last, Signor.

V. Ha! Is it so? I hope you are right, Stella. I hope, from my soul, you are right. But let us not talk of that now. I wish to aid you if I can, but to do so I must know the truth. I am used to the world and understand its ways. You must tell me the truth. Is the man who deserted you —really- your *husband?*

Ah. Pardon me. You flush. I do not mean to wound you. I want to aid you, that is all.

S. (*with dignity.*) Signor, he *is* my husband—wedded to me by a priest of our Holy Church. You would smile! 'Tis always so. But you shall see I haf not forgot my proofs.

I pray you read.

(*She draws from her bosom a small document and hands it to Vernon.*)

V. (*glancing at the signature.*) Ah! Father Maneini, of the *Madonna Speciosa.* Yes, yes, I know him well. And *he* married you. Let me see.

(*He glances back to the top of the paper and reads.*)

"To the Faithful, greeting. Know ye that in accordance with the Rites of the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, I have this day duly united in the solemn bonds of ——"

(*Vernon suddenly breaks off, as he hears a noise off Right.*)

Ha! some one is coming. Where can I put you? At this hour of the night you must not be found here.

S. Signor! I do not understand.

V. There is no time to explain. The world, Stella, is merciless in its judgments, and always *assumes* the worst. Take this till a more convenient moment.

(*He hands her the certificate.*)

Pshaw! where shall I put you? Ah! this way, quickly. It will do for an emergency. I wont keep you there very long.

(*He draws back the curtain at alcove, Left, back.*)

S. Ah! Signor.

(*She hastily enters the alcove.*)

V. (*solus.*) Stella! How gently the very name lies upon my lips. Ah! the Doctor!

(*Enter R. I. E., Dr Briggs. He has on a Punjab shirt with flowing red necktie; pantaloons several sizes too long; a tight Norfolk dressing jacket several sizes too small, and a Mexican Sombrero.*)

Dr. B. I say, Pietro—I *think* you are called Pietro?

V. Si, Signor.

Dr. B. It's very good of you to hunt me up a change of clothing, Pietro; but you'll excuse me for remarking that you are the poorest judge of measurements I ever met. Every garment either fits me too much or too little. If I were an air-ball I might hope to make this coat meet around the waist; but under the actual circumstance of the case it's impossible. As for the unmentionables—well—I've got as far through them as I can, but it's no use. I should like to take the measure of their owner, from hip to knee, in the interests of comparative anatomy!

V. It was the best of a bad bargain, Signor.

Dr. B. And a Punjab shirt, too!

Rivelli. (*heard from without, off Right.*) Come, docteur, I haf a cab at ze door.

Dr. B. All right. (*aside.*) I hope I shall reach home without being mobbed, that's all.

(*Exit Dr. B., Right—Vernon bowing him out.*)

Rivelli. (*heard from without.*) Ah! Ha, ha, ha. All genius is eccentric in dress, is it not? Ha, ha, ha.

(*Stella is seen to draw aside the curtain at alcove, and hastily enters.*

Stella. (*excitedly catching Vernon's arm.*) Whose voice was that?

V. The gentleman here was Dr. Briggs, a friend of the Count's.

S. No, no. I mean the voice that called from without, the voice that—

R. (*heard from without.*) Ah, docteur; we never know what strange fate await us, eh? Ha, ha, ha.

S. That! that! For the love of God, *whose* voice is *that?*

V. That is the Count himself.

S. (*vacantly.*) The-Count-himself.

V. Yes; the Count Cavalli; he whose aid you seek.

S. The Count Cavalli-whose-aid-I seek.

(*She breaks into tears and totters, Vernon supports her.*)

Oh yes yes. I must have been deceived—I beg your pardon—I am—very faint. I think—I am ill.

V. My good girl; taste this.

(*He assists her into a chair, and offers her a glasss of wine, which she puts aside.*)

S. Thanks, thanks, I am better now, (*whispers.*) Better—better.

Vernon bends over her as the curtain falls. A church-bell is heard tolling the hour of twelve. There is the sound of carriage-wheels without.)

END OF ACT THIRD.

ACT IV.

Drawing-room of Mrs. Holland as in Act First. As the curtain rises Vernon enters hastily, Left.

VERNON. (*solus.*) Not here yet. I was almost afraid they would be ahead of me.

Thank heaven, the time has arrived when this degradation of changing places with my own servant shall be at an end. It has galled me—oh how bitterly! But the triumph of the end will well repay me! Well! well!

Ah! my haughty, high-bred Mrs. Holland—you who crushed in cruel wantonness the life of my benefactor—how will you feel when your newly-made *Countess*, your dearly beloved daughter, is revealed to you as the wife of a lackey, the companion of a paid and miserable imposter? Ha, ha, ha, it warms my blood to think of it! Then, for the first time shall I be able to say: "Hugh Calvert, you are avenged, and your vindication is complete. The foul wrong done to you has recoiled upon your wronger, the sins of the parent have been visited upon the children." And then my vow will have been accomplished. I shall return to Rome and to my art, and—and to *Stella*. Ah, I scarcely dare to think of that; to Stella, my love, my life!

(*Enter hurriedly, at Left, Dr. Briggs.*)

Dr. B. Eh, eh where's somebody? Where's Perkins? Oh, Pietro is that you? Waiting the Count's arrival I suppose.

V. Si, Signor.

Dr. B. (*rings bell.*) Where in the world is that man Perkins? The carriage will be here before he gets to the door.

(*Enter R. servant.*)

Perkins, hurry down and make everything ready for your mistress. She is a little upset by the excitement of the morning.

(*Servant bows and exit, Left.*)

It is well you are here to assist the Count, Pietro. He is a happy man to-day. In fact it's a sort of general rejoicing. Mrs. Holland was quite overcome at the wedding ceremony, and I hurried ahead to have things in order for her reception. Ah, marriage is a solemn business, Pietro, a solemn business.

V. Si, Signor, a solemn business.

(*Dr. B. sits down hastily and a slight crash is heard.*)

Dr. B. Great Heavens! my rack!

V. (*running to Dr. B.*) Sir! what is the matter?

Dr. B. Oh! my rack! it's broken, broken—

V. Ha! Broken! What? Are you injured?

Dr. B. Oh—oh.

(*Vernon, attempts to assist Dr. B.*)

Dr. B. Take care, take care how you touch me. Oh the joints are surely smashed.

V. Joints! Heavens! Are you in pain?

Dr. B. Take care, take care. Oh! its broken beyond a doubt?

V. What is broken, sir?

Dr. B. My rack.

V. Your *rack?*

Dr. B. Yes, my new patent portable extension hat-rack. I had it in my coat-tail pocket.

V. (*aside.*) Pah!

Dr. B. It's really too bad. It was a model which I had just perfected with the utmost care. Dear me! dear me!

(*He draws forth an extension hat-rack, much damaged.*)

It's a most useful idea. You see I have so often been struck with the inconvenience of having nowhere to place your hat in public resorts that I set to work to meet the want. In a theatre a man puts his hat between his feet; by and by somebody has to reach seats in the same row, and away rolls his hat into the perspective. It's not so bad for the ladies; they keep their hats on and only inconvenience a dozen or so who sit behind and can't see over them. But for a man the difficulty is a personal one, and therefore disagreeable. This rack of mine may be applied anywhere. I took it this morning intending to attach it to the pew in the church, but there was so much to do that I forgot all about it. Its operation is so simple that— Ah, I hear the carriage. I must hurry down to assist Mrs. Holland.

(*Exit hastily at L. Dr. Briggs.*)

V. (*solus.*) So. This man's mind is busy with hat-racks and patent toys, while for *me* the crisis of a lifetime is at hand. His brain teems with notions of springs and spirals and syphons while mine reels as though the universe were rocking at its base!

My nerves are unsteady; my triumph is so magnificent that I scarce know how to face it. I am a fool I must conquer this weakness. Ha! I hear them coming. I will wait until the whole party is together. Then, *then!*

(*Exit Vernon Right.*)

(*Voice of Dr. B. off Left: "You will feel better soon I am sure."*)

(*Enter, Left, Dr. B. and Mrs. H.*)

Mrs. H. Thank you doctor. I am better already; the air has revived me. I thought I should suffocate in the chapel.

Dr. B. Yes, yes, I saw you were overcome. Pray sit here, dear Mrs. Holland.

(*He places arm chair.*)

Mrs. H. My nerves were overstrained, you know, and—dear Olive looked so lovely and so pale—so *very* pale! And to think of her being really married—and so brilliantly! It all seemed like a dream, and everything—the stained windows, the vestments, the solemn tones of the organ,—ran together in a confused mass of color and sound and—and—I think I should have fainted if you had not gotten me out. It was very good of you.

Dr. B. You know how glad I always am to serve you. It did indeed seem almost incredible, when the benediction was pronounced and Olive was really the Countess Cavalli! Dear me! how strangely things fall out in this world!

Mrs. H. Strangely indeed. But come, there must be no long faces today; the bridal party will be here in a moment. Ah! Listen to the chimes. How merrily they ring! One might almost imagine that there was no sin or sorrow in the

world. Ah! my dear child. May she always be happy. Forgive me, doctor. A mother's heart, you know.

Dr. B. Madam, in this world there is nothing more sacred.

(*Looking off L.*)

Yes, Frothingham and Cecily leading the way and sparring good naturedly as usual. For people in love with each other, they delight in teasing to an extent absolutely incomprehensible.

(*Enter Right Frothingham, with Cecily on his arm.*)

F. Here we come, a bride and groom *de facto*, and a bride and groom *de jure*, as the lawyers say.

C. Never jest on a grave subject. Ha, ha, ha.

Mrs. H. Is Olive coming?

C. Yes, their carriage followed ours. Cavalli is radiant.

Dr. He ought to be; he has drawn a prize.

F. Do you know I think I never saw a better pleased bridegroom; there was a look of real triumph in his eyes when the final word was pronounced.

Mrs. H. I trust it will all turn out for the best.

C. (*looking off Left.*) Ah, they are here at last. Olive's eyes are just red enough to be becoming.

(*Voice of Rivelli heard from without.*) Lean' upon my arm. You are flustered, *mia cara.*

(*Enter L., Rivelli and Olive. They cross to Mrs. H., who kisses Olive on the forehead. Rivelli kisses Mrs. H.'s hand. Vernon enters. R., and relieves Rivelli of his hat and light overcoat which is lying across his arm. He places these on chair at back.*

R. (*Intently watching Vernon.*) The Countess' wrap, Pietro.

(*Vernon comes down. Olive takes wrap from her shoulders and hands to Vernon. As he looks up their eyes meet. There is an instant of deep silence. Olive shrinks back and is supported by Rivelli. Vernon utters a cry and reels backward.*)

V. Stella! Oh God!

Dr. B. (*starting forward.*) What does this mean?

*R. The Countess is faint. Pay no attention to my man. He is subject to these attacks of aberration. A glass of water, please.

Mrs. H. (*going to Olive.*) My child, what is this?

R. Nothing. My valet has startled her.

V. Liar!

F. (*starting.*) Ha!

(*Frothingham interposes to prevent Vernon from striking Rivelli.*)

V. This is some frightful mistake. Hear me for a moment. This lady is—

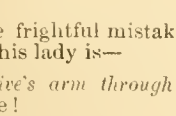
R. (*drawing Olive's arm through his own.*) This lady is *my* wife!

V. (*stunned.*) His—his *wife!* Oh— it is true. Lost! Lost!

C. Olive; dear Olive, what does it all mean?

O. Oh—I—am ill. Very ill. Get me away from here please.

(*Riv. offers to support her, but she repels him.*)



O. I do not require aid, sir.

R. As you prefer—*always*, madame.

Dr. B. Count, there is a mystery here which—

V. Which I will explain. He is no Count!

(*All utter exclamations of astonishment.*)

V. His name is Tonio Rivelli—

Dr. B. His name is Tonio, the Count Cavalli, whose marriage has but now been—

V. No! He is my lackey; my paid servant; my despicable slave.

R. (*fiercely.*) Yes, your lackey!

(*He points towards Olive who has swooned into a chair and is tenderly held by Cecily.*)

R. Your despicable slave whom you once struck here—*here!* (*places his hand to his forehead.*) Your despicable slave who has at last avenged that blow! Your slave who now possesses the jewel that you would have *died* to possess! Your slave who has at last become your *master!* He best may laugh who wins, Master Eustace Vernon.

Mrs. H. Eustace Vernon!

V. It is your last triumph, devil!

(*Vernon rushes upon Rivelli, but is restrained by Frothingham and Dr. Briggs.*)

F. (*to Ver.*) And who are you?

V I am Eustace Vernon, the friend and heir of Hugh Calvert, whom *you*, madame, (*to Mrs. H.*) jilted and wronged years ago.

Mrs. H. (*with a cry.*) Hugh Calvert! The curse has come home to me, oh!

F. (*to Ver.*) Sir, you shall answer well to me for the ruin and dishonor you have brought upon my family.

V. You are already avenged in the worse ruin I have brought upon myself.

(*As he speaks Olive revives and eagerly leans forward.*)

The only woman whom I ever loved is there. (*indicating Olive.*) I lived but to learn her name,—to know her,—to win her, if it might be. My days were passed in plans for *her*; my nights glorified with dreams of her sweet presence. It was her face that I painted upon my canvas in Rome. Her's! Her's!

(*Vernon buries his face in his hands.*)

Mrs. H. Ha! In Rome. (*aside to Olive.*) Is he not the artist of the chapel?

O. Alas, yes.

(*A noise off Right.* Voice? "I tell you, you can't go in." "I tell you, I *will* go in," &c., &c. *Dr. B. goes up stage to see what the trouble is.*)

V. (*continuing with effort.*) I set her image up in my heart of heart as queen.

I tore myself away from Rome, thinking she was still there. I came to America to revenge the wrongs of my benefactor. And now—my plans have recoiled upon my own head! Hope—happiness—are dead for me forever. Stella. Stella.

(*He reaches his hands towards Olive who starts towards him.*)

R. (*interposing.*) My wife, Signor. I will trouble you to remember that fact.

(*Enter hastily, Right, back, Stella. She comes down. Rivelli's back is towards her.*)

R. We stand here as man and wife.

(*As he turns he sees Stella immediately before him.*)

S. Ay, as man and wife, in the eyes of God and man.

R. Stella! Perdition!

Dr. B. (*aside.*) Stella! Stella! Seems to me I begin to see stars.

V. (*aside.*) Ha! she here!

Mrs. H. Who is this girl and how came she here?

S. Signora, I am here to claim my own. This man is my husband.

(*Exclamations of surprise from all.*)

R. Malediction! Will you believe such a tale as this?

S. Yes, Tonio, they will believe when I show them the *proof.*

FROTH. } Tonio!
Dr. B. }

O. (*going to Froth.*) Oh!

S. (*producing certificate.*) See.

(*All crowd about her.*)

V. It is true! It is true! I have already seen this document but was interrupted before I read the name. Oh fate! fate!

Dr. B. (*to R.*) Then, sir, you are guilty of a double villainy. The wedding which we have just attended was no wedding at all and—

F. And my sister is free.

O. (*aside.*) Light! Light at last!

V. Free! Free to give me life if she but will. (*coming down to Mrs. H.*) Mädam, the past is crowded with wrongs. I have sought retaliation. I ask for your forgiveness. Will you not be generous to one who has suffered much?

(*Mrs. H. gives him her hand, and reaches her other hand to Olive: Then she places Olive's hand in his and turns aside weeping.*)

V. (*To Olive.*) Indeed I have loved you long. What is my answer?

(*She looks into his face for an instant and then throws herself into his arms with a sudden abandon.*)

F. (*To Vic.*) There's a pose worth imitating Cecily. Eh?

C. Foolish fellow! You know that I love you

(*He takes her hand.*)

Dr. B. (*To Ric.*) And what have *you* got to say for yourself?

R. That it is dumb luck alone which has given you the advantage. As for me, I have outwitted you all. I have punished enough the man who struck me and I am satisfied. I always meant to return to Stella ven I had complete my purpose and—

Dr. B. And you will do so now? On that condition alone we will spare you from punishment.

S. Ah, Tonio, I haf always loved you. And the bambino, Tonio—

R. I vill do so now.

S. Ah!

(*Tonio and Stella pass up stage.*)

Dr. B. As a dowry to start afresh I present to your wife your unpaid interest in my patent fly-catcher. It will be worth a fortune to your grandchildren.

S. A thousand thanks, Signor.

R. (*aside to Stella.*) A hundred will be sufficient.

Mrs. H. (*To Vernon.*) You, sir, should know that my daughter is portionless. The fortune which we once possessed is gone.

V. But happily the means to restore it are at my command.

O. But I cannot even give you my heart.

V. Ha!

O. No. You robbed me of it long ago——in Rome.

V. Ah, I shall show you how safely I have kept it, on our wedding day. Hearts shall be served at our wedding breakfast.

F. And to make it more effective we'll have the wedding breakfast ordered for *two* couples, and their friends, please.

C. Provided I give my consent.

F. Which of course is doubtful.

(*Cecily boxes Frothingham's ears.*)

V. And I shall claim the privilege of providing the dowry of my brother's bride.

F. (*clasping Vernon's hand.*) My dear fellow.

Mrs. H. Ah, doctor, all comes right at last.

Dr. B. Yes. And now that they are all so happy, won't you give me your particular attention for a moment.

Mrs. H. My particular attention?

Dr. B. Yes. I have just patented an invention very pertinent to the present occasion.

Mrs. H. (*aside.*) Another invention!

Dr. B. And quite simple. It is a self-adjusting ring, (*producing a finger ring from his vest-pocket.*) capable of being enlarged or made smaller at pleasure. It will thus fit any finger.

Mrs. H. Ah?

Dr. B. Ingenious, isn't it?

Mrs. H. Very.

Dr. B. You see by a slight pressure of the spring —so—

(*He places the ring upon her finger.*)

Mrs. H. That is really *very* nice. It's very comfortable too. Doesn't incommode one in the least.

(*Dr. B. is bending over Mrs. H.'s hand. Cecily signals to Frothingham, Olive and Vernon, who come silently down, watching Dr. B. and Mrs. H., Rivelli and Stella remain at back absorbed in conversation.*)

Dr. B. You're sure it doesn't feel disagreeable.

Mrs. H. Oh, not in the least I assure you.

Dr. B. Ah, I am glad of that.

Mrs. H. I think a woman's hand always looks the better for a ring.

Dr. B. I am more than glad you think so, because—because—

(*Mrs. H. looks up and meets the Doctor's eyes.*)

Mrs. H. (*Embarassed.*) Why doctor—I—I—really—

Dr. B. No, no. *Don't* take it off. Please wear it always—for my sake.

Mrs. H. Ah—my dear friend—my *best* of friends.

(*She gives him her hand. The others break into a merry laugh. Dr. B. and Mrs. H. turn, confused.*)

F. We all wish you joy.

V. Ay. Every one of us.

(*Enter R., back, a servant.*)

SERVANT. Luncheon is served, madam.

C. (*aside.*) Oh! I'm ever so glad. I'm awfully hungry.

O. Let us have it in the conservatory, among the flowers. (*To Mrs. H.*)

Mrs. H. Very good, dear. It shall be as you wish.

F. And while you *are* giving orders, please order that wedding breakfast for *three* couples.

V. (*indicating audience.*) And their friends.

(*The ladies give their hands to the gentlemen. Rivelli is seen to kiss Stella upon the forehead. A chime of bells is heard as the curtain descends.*)

SERVANT.
*
STEL. * * RIV.
MRS. H. * * * OL.
FROTH. * DR. B. * VER.
CEC. *

CURTAIN.

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